

FOR HONOR'S SAKE.

BY B. L. FARJON.

Author of "Great Porter Square," "The Bright Star of Life," &c.

(CONTINUED.)

He was in London, in partial disgrace with his father, and in the career of a man who had already contracted vicious and idle habits; he was frequently from home, and although his father questioned him severely, he would give no account of his movements and proceedings. Some accounts he did give, but his father knew instinctively that they were false or evasive. As he could obtain no satisfaction from his son, Mr. Rutland, aware of the perfect confidence which existed between Eustace and Mabel, applied to her for information; but she would not utter one word to her father. Her father could extract nothing from her, and then gradually grew within him an idea that there was a conspiracy against him in his own home, a conspiracy in which Edward Layton was the principal agent. It was natural, perhaps, that he should think more harshly of this stranger than of his own children.

Had he set a watch upon his son, he might have made discoveries which would have been of service to all, and which might have averted terrible consequences. But proud and self-willed as he was, it did not occur to him to do anything which in any way savored of meanness. His son Eustace went his way, therefore, to sure and certain ruin. When he was absent from home he corresponded regularly with his sister; and Mr. Rutland sometimes demanded to see his son's letters. "You can make nothing of it, papa," said Mabel. "Eustace and I do not correspond like other people."

He insisted, nevertheless, upon seeing these letters, and Mabel showed them to him. As he could not understand them, he demanded that she should read them intelligently to him; but it being a fact that there was no correspondence in Eustace's correspondence which would deepen his father's anger against him, the young girl refused to read them. This, as may be supposed, did not tend to pacify Mr. Rutland. It intensified his suspicions of his heart toward those whom he believed were conspiring against him. He applied to Edward Layton.

"You are in my daughter's confidence," he said to the young man, "and as you have wronged from me a reluctant consent to an engagement with her, I must ask you to give me the information which she withholds from me."

He met with no other result. Edward Layton declared that he would not violate the confidence which Mabel had reposed in him. At one time Mr. Rutland said to Edward Layton:

"My son has been absent from home for several days. Have you seen him?" "Yes, sir," replied Edward, "I have seen him."

But he would say nothing further. Mabel had extracted from him a solemn promise that he would reveal nothing without her consent, and he was steadfastly loyal to her. He had another reason for his silence, and in the light of that reason, and of the feelings which Mr. Rutland harbored toward him, he felt that the happiness he hoped would be his was slipping from him.

The explanation of another reason, which unhappily was a personal one, brings upon the scene a person who played a brief but pregnant part in this drama of real life, and who is now in his grave. This person was Edward Layton's father.

"What was the nature of the relations," said Mrs. Rutland, "between this gentleman and my dear son Eustace I do not know. All that I do know is that they were in association with each other, and I am afraid not to a good end. It came also, by some strange means, to the knowledge of my husband, and a frightful scene occurred between him and Edward Layton, in which Mabel's lover was dismissed from the house. My husband withdrew the consent he had given to the engagement, and I have never since since when I have thought of them, have made me shudder, they were so unnecessarily cruel and severe. If from this day, my husband said to the young gentleman, 'you put your daughter's love toward them. Hard I may be when my feelings are strongly roused, but I am ever just. In the secrets that are being hidden from me there is, I am convinced, some degrading and shameful element; otherwise it is not possible that you should conspire to keep them from me. If the matter upon which you are engaged were honorable, there would be no occasion to keep it from my knowledge. Do not forget that you have it in your power to wreck not only my daughter's happiness, but her mother's as well. That consideration will have any weight with you? There was much more to this, to which Mr. Edward Layton listened with a sad patience, which deepened my pity for him. He bore, without remonstrance, all the obloquies that were heaped upon him by my unhappy husband, who soon afterward left the room with the injunction that Mr. Layton was on no account to be allowed an interview with my daughter. Then Mr. Layton said to me, 'I must bear it. If the happiness of my life is lost it will be through the deep, the sacred love I bear for your child. I devote not only the dearest hopes of my life, but my life itself, to her cause. Fate is against us. A man can do no more than his duty.'"

From that day this Mabel's mother has never seen Edward Layton. When she heard of his marriage into a family whose position in society was to say the least equivalent to that of her own, fearing the effect the news would have upon her dear daughter, Mabel Rutland suffered deeply, but during that time of anguish she appeared to summon to her aid a certain fortitude and resignation which served her in good stead. It astonished her mother one day to hear her say:

"Do not blame Edward, mamma; he is all that is good and noble. Although he is another lady's husband, and although our lives can never be united, as we had once hoped, I shall ever love and honor him."

"Time will bring comfort to you, my darling," said the mother, "and it may be that there is still a happy fate in store for you. You may meet with another man around whom no mystery hangs, to whom your heart will be drawn."

"Never, mamma," replied Mabel. "I shall never marry now."

What most grievously disturbed Mrs. Rutland was the circumstance that, even within a few weeks of Edward Layton's marriage he corresponded with her daughter. Her father was not aware of this. He usually rose late in the morning, and it devolved upon Mrs. Rutland to receive the correspondence which came by the first post. The letters that Edward Layton wrote to Mabel were invariably posted at night, from which it would appear that the young man was aware that they would fall into the hands of Mabel's mother, and that Mr. Rutland, unless he were made acquainted with the fact, was not likely otherwise to discover it. When Mrs. Rutland gave her daughter the first letter from Mr. Layton Mabel said to her:

"Do not be alarmed, mamma. This letter is in reply to one I wrote to Mr. Layton. It is a letter which I have written in which I beg you to give me without papa's knowing. It may appear wrong to you, but it is really not so. Everything is being done for the best, as perhaps you will one day learn."

She sat at heart as Mrs. Rutland was she had too firm a trust in her daughter's innate purity and sense of self respect not to believe what she said, both in its letter and in its spirit, and she was also aware of the correspondence which she also

kept from Mr. Rutland. By pursuing the course she did, Mrs. Rutland preserved, to some extent, peace in the household. This matter went on for two years, until Eustace Rutland's wild conduct produced a terrible disturbance. His absence from home had grown more frequent and prolonged, and he was dreadfully involved, and Mr. Rutland received letters and visits from money lenders (a class of men that he abhorred) in connection with his son's proceedings. Incensed beyond endurance, he banished Eustace from the house, and forbade him ever again to enter his doors.

"It seemed to be fated," said Mrs. Rutland, "that there should be always something in our family that it was necessary to conceal from my husband's knowledge. He banished Eustace from home, but that did not weaken my love for our dear lad. Three times during the past year I have seen Eustace, and I have not made my husband acquainted with the fact. What could I do? Had I asked his permission he would have merely refused it, and had I told him that I could not resist the impulse of my heart to fold my dear boy in my arms, it would only have made matters worse for all of us."

She related to Dr. Daincourt a circumstance which had become an angry quarrel. Among the presents the father had given to his daughter was a very costly one, a diamond bracelet of great value, for which Mr. Rutland had paid no less than 500 guineas. On the evening of a dinner party was given at the house, and Mr. Rutland particularly desired that Mabel should look her best on the occasion. He said to her, "I have a present for you, and I expressed a desire that she should wear certain articles of jewelry, and most especially her diamond bracelet. He noticed at the dinner table that this bracelet was not there, and he inquired of Mabel before his guests, but when they had departed he asked Mabel why she had not worn it."

"I have so many other things, papa," she replied, "that you have given me. It was not necessary."

"But," said her father, "I desired you particularly to wear the bracelet. Is it broken? If so, it can be easily repaired. Let me see it."

Then the mother saw trouble in her daughter's face. Mabel endeavored to evade her father's request, and strove to divert the conversation into another channel. But he insisted so determinedly upon seeing the bracelet that she was at length compelled to confess that it was not in her possession. Upon this Mr. Rutland questioned her very harshly, but he contented himself with her own satisfactory information as to what had become of it. Suddenly he inquired if her purse was in her room. She answered yes, and he desired her to bring it down to him. She obeyed, and when he opened the purse he found only three or four shillings in it.

"Is this all you have?" he inquired. "Yes, papa," she said, "this is all."

"But it was only yesterday," said Mr. Rutland, "that you asked me for £20, and I gave it to you. What have you done with the money?"

Upon this point, he could obtain no satisfactory information. He was greatly angered.

"I thought," he said, "when Mr. Layton married into the family of a professional man, and a man of honor, that he would bring to the family peace of mind, and it seems to me, against my honor, would come to an end. It was not so. I perceive that I am regarded here as an enemy by my own family, not as a man who has endeavored all through life to perform his duties in an honorable and straightforward way. Go to your room and let me see the diamond bracelet before this month is ended, or let me know what you have done with it. If you have lost it," he added, "gazing sternly upon his daughter, 'find it.'"

Before the month was ended Mabel showed him the diamond bracelet; but her mother was aware that there were other articles missing from among her daughter's jewelry.

Mrs. Rutland, being come to the end of her narrative, Dr. Daincourt began to question her.

"Your daughter," he said, "was taken ill on March 23, and I understand that she has been confined to her bed since that day. Were there any premonitory symptoms of a serious illness, or was the seizure a sudden one?"

"It was quite sudden," replied Mrs. Rutland. "I went into her room early in the morning and found her in a high state of fever."

"Has she been sensible at all since that time?" "No."

"Not sufficiently sensible to recognize any one who attended her?" "No; she does not even know me, her own mother."

"What did the physician whom you first called in say about the case?" "He said that it had been accelerated by her having caught a violent cold through wearing damp clothing."

"Do you think she wore that clothing in the house?" "No."

(Dr. Daincourt has certain ways and methods of his own. He is in the habit of keeping in his pocketbook a tablet of the weather from day to day, by which, often since when I have thought of them, have made me shudder, they were so unnecessarily cruel and severe. If from this day, my husband said to the young gentleman, 'you put your daughter's love toward them. Hard I may be when my feelings are strongly roused, but I am ever just. In the secrets that are being hidden from me there is, I am convinced, some degrading and shameful element; otherwise it is not possible that you should conspire to keep them from me. If the matter upon which you are engaged were honorable, there would be no occasion to keep it from my knowledge. Do not forget that you have it in your power to wreck not only my daughter's happiness, but her mother's as well. That consideration will have any weight with you? There was much more to this, to which Mr. Edward Layton listened with a sad patience, which deepened my pity for him. He bore, without remonstrance, all the obloquies that were heaped upon him by my unhappy husband, who soon afterward left the room with the injunction that Mr. Layton was on no account to be allowed an interview with my daughter. Then Mr. Layton said to me, 'I must bear it. If the happiness of my life is lost it will be through the deep, the sacred love I bear for your child. I devote not only the dearest hopes of my life, but my life itself, to her cause. Fate is against us. A man can do no more than his duty.'"

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